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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PL](#)

SUBJECT: PIS INSIDER SAYS ELECTIONS "PROBABLE" AFTER
PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH OPPOSITION, BUT NO CONCRETE STEPS
YET.

REF: WARSAW 1731

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Ken Hillas, for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

¶1. (C) In the wake of the August 8 firing of Interior Minister Janusz Kaczmarek, part of the fallout of the July firing of Deputy Prime Minister Andrzej Lepper, there is once again serious talk of early elections, but there has yet to be any concrete action to set the process in motion. As experience has shown, threats by PiS leaders regarding early elections need to be taken with a grain of salt. While there is general agreement on foreign policy issues among the major parties (Law and Justice (PiS), Civic Platform (PO), and Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), there is broad popular opposition to continued involvement in Iraq, and other parties could attempt to make this and other issues part of an election campaign. End Summary

¶2. (C) As Kaczmarek and Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro duked it out in public throughout the day on August 9 (reftel), President Lech Kaczynski held a four hour meeting with Civic Platform (PO) opposition leader Donald Tusk and emerged agreeing that autumn 2007 elections were "unavoidable," according to public statements by Kaczynski's media advisor Michal Kaminski. During an August 10 meeting, Law and Justice (PiS) insider Adam Lipinski, who is Chief of the Prime Minister's cabinet, told Charge that elections were "probable," but made clear it was the Prime Minister who would decide. If there were to be elections, they would be held quickly, he said, because if the process is drawn out, the opposition would just use the time to attack PiS.

¶3. (SBU) That said, there have been no concrete steps taken toward elections, leaving open many possibilities. The Kaczynskis could once again be using the threat of elections to bring their unruly coalition partners into line. Roman Giertych, head of the League of Polish Families (LPR), has repeatedly made clear he does not want early elections, and for good reason. If his party were to run alone it faces the real possibility of not meeting the five percent threshold to win parliamentary seats. Andrzej Lepper, head of the populist Self-Defense (SO) also likely does not want elections, and has joined Giertych in calling for PM Kaczynski to resign. The Left and Democracy (LiD) grouping, led by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) has called for a constructive vote of no confidence, a difficult mechanism that would require all the opposition parties plus SO to come to agreement on a candidate for Prime Minister and then achieve a two-thirds vote in the Sejm, an unlikely scenario.

¶4. (C) If the Kaczynskis decide to seek early elections, they will likely use the mechanism of having the Sejm dissolve itself, an easier option, but one that requires PO's and PiS's support to achieve the required two-thirds majority. Lipinski said they are looking at the date of October 21. Early elections are, of course, a risk for PiS.

Most opinion polls show the party lagging behind PO. Based on its come-from-behind win in 2005, PiS strategists are disdainful of opinion polls and confident of their campaign skills. They acknowledge the risk, but believe the current chaos makes governing difficult.

15. (C) Comment: Each time over the past two years that the Kaczynskis have reached this point, they have decided to avoid elections and have managed to patch the coalition back together. There are many risks for PiS in going to elections, and not a few implications for the U.S. When asked, Lipinski said he thought the broad agreement with PO on foreign policy issues meant that elections would have no immediate impact on Missile Defense negotiations or other foreign policy priorities. However, it could become an issue in any campaign, which poses risks. Predictions of early elections should be taken with a grain of salt until they actually materialize. End Comment.
HILLAS